

## **KERA Initiative Summary**

**4/29/04**

### **Student Assessment and School Accountability**

#### **Assessment**

For any organization or program to succeed, its progress must be measured on a regular basis. The Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS) measures the progress Kentucky schools are making in educating their students. The assessments are administered in the spring of each year.

CATS uses both a national norm-referenced test and a standards-based test developed by Kentucky teachers to assess students in reading, mathematics, science, social studies, arts and humanities, and practical living/vocational skills. Writing is assessed in grades four, seven and twelve through portfolio pieces and a writing prompt.

In June 2001, the Kentucky Board of Education accepted new standards that clarify what novice, apprentice, proficient and distinguished student performance mean. Standards have been written specifically for each content area and grade level that is tested as part of CATS. Individual student performance scores are reported to students and parents. School and district academic indices are reported to schools and the public each fall and must be included in the annual School Report Card.

Plans are currently underway to implement additional assessments in grades 3-8 in reading and mathematics for compliance with the federal *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*.

#### **Accountability**

The goal for Kentucky schools is proficiency (a score of 100 on a 140-point scale) by 2014. In the fall of 2001, each Kentucky school received its own customized growth chart showing its baseline. A line drawn from the baseline to 100 shows the improvement necessary as the years progress for that school to reach proficiency. A school's progress is measured against its own baseline.

While measuring progress is a good thing, the measurement must count for something. In Kentucky, a school's progress toward proficiency, or its lack of progress toward that goal, results in benefits or consequences. Public recognition is the current benefit for progress, since the defunding of the School Rewards Trust Fund prevents the issuance of financial rewards, the practice implemented in the past. Schools failing to improve receive assistance through a Scholastic Audit, school improvement plans, evaluation of school personnel, assistance from a highly skilled educator or student transfer to successful schools.

With the enactment of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB), a second dimension was added to Kentucky's accountability system: a goal of getting all students to the proficient level in reading and mathematics (referred to as adequate yearly progress,

AYP). Growth charts are produced for elementary, middle, and high school reading and mathematics that communicate the starting points and the annual goals that ensure the success of all students in total and those who are members of particular subpopulations.

The federal consequences for schools and districts that do not meet the goals established by NCLB are applied according to a tiered system, dependent on how many years a school or district does not meet adequate yearly progress.

High standards for student achievement and accountability for results are the hallmarks of Kentucky's successful system of public education. In just a few short years, CATS has become a nationally recognized and respected testing system.

***Statutory References:*** KRS 158.6453, 158.6455, 158.6457, 158.782, 158.805, 158.685

## **KERA Initiative Summary**

**4/29/04**

### **Extended School Services**

Anyone who has ever struggled with schoolwork – even in just one academic subject or one class – knows that a little extra help from a teacher or a tutor can make all the difference.

Kentucky's Extended School Services Program (ESS) provides that extra help. ESS provides additional instructional time for at-risk students. Schools schedule sessions outside normal school hours – before school, after school, in the evenings, in the summer, and during intersessions created by alternative calendars – to meet specific, identified student needs. Schools may also request a waiver to use a portion of their ESS funds to provide extra instructional time for students during the regular school day. This time must be in addition to the instruction provided by the regular classroom teacher. Instructions and guidelines for the waiver are available on the Kentucky Department of Education web page under Extended School Services. Because schools receive a state grant for this program, most services are free of charge to students and their parents.

Each school determines what services will best meet student needs. Schools typically offer one or more of these services:

- differentiated instructional activities in core content areas
- tutoring and small-group instruction
- help with homework and study skills
- transportation provided when necessary
- training for parents who want to help their children learn
- counseling or referrals to other sources of assistance
- peer tutoring
- professional development for teachers who are providing Extended School Services

Students must be referred for ESS and parents must grant permission before a student is enrolled in ESS activities. Students being served during the day do not need parent permission, but a school may choose to notify parents of the services. A student may participate in ESS on a short-term or long-term basis, depending on individual need.

***Statutory References:*** KRS 158.6451; 704 KAR 3:390

## **KERA Initiative Summary**

**4/29/04**

### **Financial Equity**

Before the Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990 (KERA), students in some Kentucky communities were more likely than students in other communities to get a good education. The reason: money. Communities with a strong property tax base could raise more money to support their local schools than could communities with a weak property tax base.

The Reform Act changed the funding system. An initiative known as SEEK (Support Education Excellence in Kentucky) makes more dollars available for education; spreads those dollars according to local needs, with more state money going to districts with the least amount of local money; and gives all Kentucky students equal opportunities to learn.

The framers of this new system set out to accomplish the following things:

- Set a target revenue for every school district that would reflect each district's needs;
- Determine state aid as the difference between each district's target revenue level and the revenue that would be produced by a uniform property tax levy;
- Permit districts to exceed the target revenue level, based on decisions of local school boards and local voters, and provide equalized state aid;
- Raise the effort of low-wealth districts;
- Limit a district's ability to generate revenue too far above the amounts raised in other districts;
- Provide equalized state support for facilities;
- Provide support for certain programs outside the basic education program;
- Provide fiscal incentives to districts to improve pupil performance.

Under the old funding system, the state provided funds to local districts based on the resources schools were thought to need, including personnel, and monitored districts to ensure that funds were spent for the purposes the state intended. There was no accountability for pupil performance.

SEEK starts with the premise that school districts and schools know best how to organize their resources to promote pupil achievement and that the state's role is to establish performance objectives, provide adequate funding and hold schools and districts accountable for performance. Under this approach, the state allocates funds to districts that allocate funds to schools that spend their funds in ways they determine will best help them meet performance objectives.

This new approach to financial equity cut the funding gap in per-pupil spending between the more- and less-wealthy districts by half (from \$1,200 to \$600) in the first ten years.

However, because the level of state support has not grown as fast as inflation nor as fast as the performance requirements that have been placed on schools, the gap has begun to widen again. Though since 1990 state funding for education has increased by 50 percent, local revenue for education has risen 150 percent. Even though recent studies have shown that the SEEK formula continues to meet the requirements for equity, studies of the adequacy of funding show significant shortages in the funds needed to meet the goals of KERA .

***Statutory References:***

State Support: KRS 157.360, 157.270, 157.360, 157.370, 157.410

Local Support: KRS 160.470, 160.593-160.597, 160.605-160.611, 160.613-160.617, 160.621-160.633, 157.440

## **KERA Initiative Summary**

**4/29/04**

### **Family Resource/Youth Services Centers (FRYSCs)**

The Family Resource/Youth Services Centers program recognizes that some children and families face problems and situations that stand in the way of learning. To clear the way, centers help students and families get the health, social, and community assistance they need.

By law, all centers must address certain specified components plus additional areas identified by assessments of local needs.

Family resource centers provide these services for elementary school students and their families:

- Full-time child care for 2- and 3-year-olds;
- After-school and summer/school holiday child care for ages 4-12;
- Families in Training home visits and child development monitoring for new parents;
- Parent and Child Education (PACE) or other opportunities that integrate adult education and parenting skills training for undereducated parents and child development programs for their children;
- Support and training for child day care providers;
- Health services or referral to health services.

Youth Services Centers provide these services for middle, junior high and high school students and their families:

- Referrals to health and social services;
- Employment counseling, training and placement;
- Summer and part-time job development;
- Drug and alcohol abuse counseling;
- Family crisis and mental health counseling.

Both kinds of centers help with General Education Diploma (G.E.D.) information, drug and alcohol abuse prevention and referrals to government financial aid programs.

Schools in which at least 20 percent of the students are eligible for the federal free and reduced lunch program qualify for a center. Approximately 1,200 schools are eligible. Funding was sufficient to provide center services to all but approximately 50 of those schools by 2003-2004.

Kentucky's Cabinet for Health and Family Services provides administration and oversight, technical assistance and training in this program.

***Statutory References:*** KRS 156.497 and 156.4977, as amended

## **KERA Initiative Summary**

**4/29/04**

### **Kentucky Education Technology System (KETS)**

Kentucky recognizes two things about technology: It is the wave of the future, and it has great potential as an equalizing force in the provision of educational resources.

KETS provides networked computers and other electronic tools to support teaching and learning and to facilitate administrative functions at the school and district levels.

In Phase I, designed to put the infrastructure in place, KETS sent money into every Kentucky school district to put powerful technology in classrooms. Each year, districts received funds by matching them dollar for dollar until every classroom is now equipped with these tools:

- Direct dial-out phones in every classroom for teachers;
- Video access to classroom TVs in every classroom;
- One KETS-standard, networked computer for every teacher, with access to productivity software (word processing, spreadsheets, presentation, database) e-mail, the Internet and other instructional software;
- One KETS-standard, networked computer (with the same capabilities as the teacher's computer) per six students.

Phase II, now in progress, is designed to focus on applying KETS dollars to operations, maintenance, incremental replacement and new and emerging technologies. Districts continue to match KETS state funds received dollar for dollar.

Over several years, the Milken Foundation, Kentucky Long-Term Policy Research Center and other national studies/publications have rated Kentucky a top-five state in the use of technology tools in instruction. Several important features make KETS a nationally recognized leader in education technology:

- Long-term implementation based on a state master plan, district plans and school plans;
- Statewide data, voice, video, text software and hardware infrastructure to serve all districts, schools and classrooms for instruction and administration;
- Statewide teacher, student and administrator technology standards in place;
- Every classroom and school equipped with high speed connections to deliver the Internet and electronic mail to every classroom;
- Every student, teacher and administrator provided with a school-provided email account;
- Every school equipped with a text Internet library;
- State-Internet firewall protection provided statewide;

- Student Technology Leadership Program (STLP) support available to assist with local support gaps;
- First state in the nation to have a standardized school (STI) and financial management (MUNIS) system in every school and district;
- School-level flexibility to choose from a wide range of hardware and software;
- Reduced costs for every district through statewide contracting.

Kentucky was the first state to have every one of its school districts linked to an integrated network. Technology has such an important role in Kentucky that a new technology competency standard for both new and experienced teachers is included in the teacher certification process.

***Statutory References:*** KRS 156.660, 156.666, 156.670, 156.690, 168.015



## **KERA Initiative Summary**

**4/29/04**

### **Professional Development**

The framers of the Kentucky Education Reform Act knew that to expect higher levels of learning for students requires providing opportunities for educators to improve their teaching and administrative skills. Legislators included in the law several important professional development provisions:

- A line item appropriation in the state budget;
- Four days of professional development for every teacher every year;
- Leadership development programs and comprehensive district improvement plans with embedded professional development supporting school needs;
- A requirement that at least 65 percent of designated professional development funds from the district flexible focus funds be spent at the local school level, empowering schools and school councils to develop and approve professional development plans to meet their needs;
- Use of state funds for all staff, including classified and parents on school councils and committees, to support initiatives that are consistent with the comprehensive school improvement plan.

Each school district has a professional development coordinator, and each school has a professional development planning committee that works with the coordinator to develop goals, activities and professional growth expectations for teachers and administrators.

The Department of Education supports an electronic consumer bulletin board that posts information regarding professional development providers and programs.

Professional development is now seen as a critical part of academic improvement:

- Schools that have reached the highest level of rewards in multiple cycles of the assessment and accountability system cite professional development as a major factor in their success;
- The majority of Kentucky schools have incorporated professional development within school functions, emerging from the shared concerns of school staff to improve learning opportunities for students;
- Local schools and districts are building their capacity to nurture their own instructional change efforts;
- Accountability for professional development results is changing the narrow focus of evaluation from event-based to measures of program impact over time;
- Collaboration between the Department of Education and the Education Professional Standards Board has resulted in more opportunities for teachers to achieve advanced degrees and pay status through their participation in professional development.

Allocations for professional development have increased from \$1.25 per student in average daily attendance in 1990-91 to \$23 per student in average daily attendance in 1999-00.

***Statutory References:*** KRS 156.095, 156.0951, 160.345, 158.070

## **KERA Initiative Summary**

**4/29/04**

### **Building A Strong Foundation for School Success – The Kentucky State-Funded Preschool Program**

The Kentucky State-Funded Preschool program was established in 1990 as part of the Kentucky Education Reform Act to make sure that all children have the opportunity to succeed in school when they enter the primary program. This preschool program is designed to reduce barriers to learning for four-year-old children who qualify for free lunch and three- and four-year-old children with disabilities, regardless of income. Districts are encouraged through statute to serve other four-year-olds as placements are available and through local funds or other resources.

#### **Program Requirements for Children and Families:**

- ♦ a minimum half-day (2 ½ hours) developmentally appropriate preschool education program
- ♦ a minimum of two home visits a year
- ♦ child development screening and health screenings, including vision and hearing
- ♦ collaboration with medical, health, mental health and social service agencies
- ♦ parent involvement activities
- ♦ one meal each day
- ♦ bus monitors present on the bus when transportation is provided

#### **Program Requirements for Local School Districts:**

- ♦ Collaboration with existing community services including First Steps, child care and Head Start
- ♦ Signed assurances for preschool program operation through the Comprehensive District Improvement Plan
- ♦ Submission of Program Reports: State Child Count, Supplemental Threes Child Count, Program Summary and Preschool Performance Report to the Kentucky Department of Education

Beyond the basic program requirements, preschool programs continually strive for high program quality. High quality preschool programs promote learning and development through attention to: knowing how young children develop and learn; the physical environment; programming and schedule as well as interactions between children and adults, children and their peers and children and their environment.

#### **Evidence of a High Quality Preschool Program:**

- ♦ **Promoting Learning and Development**
  - ☆ Intellectual Development:
    - ample time for exploring

- extension of “play” and opportunities for thinking and reasoning skills to be developed
- engagement in activities and learning from all content areas – reading, writing, mathematics, science, social studies, etc.
- language and literacy promotion of reading stories aloud, encouraging children to talk about their work, and creating an environment rich in print

☆Social Development:

- learning to respect others, despite differences
- a sense of community within the classroom
- learning strategies to resolve conflicts
- stimulating opportunities and materials for children to use during cooperative play

☆Large-Motor Development:

- opportunities for well-supervised physical activity
- dancing to music, exercise and activities that promote coordination included daily

☆Small-Motor Development:

- a great variety of materials at various levels of development for the development of small-motor dexterity

☆Language Development:

- language skills developed by listening to and speaking with adults
- encouragement of individual child conversations
- respecting children’s frequent talking out loud to themselves while playing
- rhymes, songs and finger plays as a part of daily adult-child interaction

## **State and National Research**

Both Kentucky and national research provide us with information concerning the results of high quality preschool programming. National research verifies that there are fewer dropouts, less remediation and referrals to special education, fewer incarcerations and ultimately less funds expended when investment of dollars at the preschool level occurs. Longitudinal research by the University of Kentucky (UK) confirms that children who attended the Kentucky Preschool Program “caught up” with their peers who were not eligible. The UK report also found the following results in a study of Kentucky’s state-funded preschool program:

- ♦ Economically disadvantaged children who attended the program did as well as children who were not disadvantaged (not income-eligible) on entry into the primary program.
- ♦ Participants were significantly better prepared for entering the primary program than were their peers who were eligible for but did not attend the program.
- ♦ Preschoolers with disabilities who attended the program improved in areas where they needed the most help. Some of the preschoolers with disabilities gained as much as one month of development for one month in the program, even though all of these children had significant delays in development in order to be eligible to enroll in the program.
- ♦ Program quality was consistent across individual classrooms around the state, with classrooms generally scoring at or above average in quality.

In *The State of Preschool: 2003 State Preschool Yearbook*, a report produced by the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER), Kentucky fared well in several areas. Overall, Kentucky met 7 of the 10 benchmarks for access, quality and resources. No state met all 10 benchmarks; however, three states met nine of the ten: Arkansas, Illinois and the Abbott Project in New Jersey. Kentucky ranked 5<sup>th</sup> in the nation for access for three-year-old-children, 7<sup>th</sup> for access for four-year-olds and 21<sup>st</sup> in the nation for resources (funding, per-child spending).

### **Trends in Funding and Enrollment**

Since 1993-94, there has been a shortfall in state preschool funds due to actual enrollment.

Kentucky's state-funded preschool program is growing. In 2003-2004, 95 out of 176 districts (54%) experienced preschool enrollment growth of more than five percent. Last year 89 districts (51%) experienced growth. In 2003-2004, the growing districts added 1,388 children. The result is a trend of increasing numbers of state-funded preschool children. Regardless of the preschool funding rates, districts must make services available to eligible children, particularly due to federal requirements for children with disabilities.

### **Training Resources**

Five early childhood regional training centers (RTCs) provide statewide preschool training and technical assistance to district preschool program staff, entry-level primary teachers, Head Start and private program staff.

***Statutory References:*** KRS 157.3175, 157.226

## KERA Initiative Summary

4/29/04

### Primary Program

Kentucky's Primary Program recognizes that children develop at different rates, with different needs and with different learning styles. The "primary school program" means that part of the elementary school program in which children are enrolled from the time they begin school until they are ready to enter the fourth grade. Notwithstanding any statute to the contrary, successful completion of the primary school program shall be a prerequisite for a child's entrance into fourth grade (KRS 158.031).

Primary programs vary from school to school, but each shall include the following critical attributes:

- *Developmentally Appropriate* - Instructional practices that address the physical, aesthetic, cognitive, emotional and social domains of children and that permit them to progress through an integrated curriculum according to their unique learning needs.
- *Multi-age, Multi-ability Classrooms* - Flexible grouping and regrouping of children of different ages, gender and abilities who may be assigned to the same teacher for more than one year.
- *Continuous Progress* – A student's unique progression through the primary school program at his/her own rate without comparison to the rate of others or consideration of the number of years in school. Retention and promotion within the primary school program are not compatible with continuous progress.
- *Authentic Assessment* - Assessment that occurs continually in the context of the learning environment and reflects actual learning experiences that can be documented through observation, anecdotal records, journals, logs, actual work samples, conferences and other methods. Authentic Assessment consists of ongoing documentation of what students learn and do in day-to-day classroom activities. Authentic Assessment includes a teacher's notes on what he/she observes a child doing in class, work samples, logs of books read, projects completed, experiments conducted, information obtained from conferences with parents and other methods.
- *Qualitative Reporting Methods* - Progress communicated through a variety of home-school communiqués, which address the growth and development of the whole child as he/she progresses through the primary school program.
- *Professional Teamwork* - All professional staff in the primary school program communicating and planning on a regular basis and using a variety of instructional delivery systems such as team-teaching and collaborative teaching.
- *Positive parent involvement* - The establishment of productive relationships between the school and the home, individuals or groups that enhance communication.

A primary classroom looks much different from the traditional classroom. Students move around the room actively engaged in their learning, working in instructional centers that

offer manipulatives, books, developmentally-appropriate writing materials, technology, art supplies and quiet space. Small groups of students work together on projects, sharing information and ideas. Teachers guide student learning through a child-centered curriculum that supports problem solving strategies and addresses academic expectations based on the Kentucky Program of Studies and Core Content for Assessment.

***Statutory References:*** KRS 157.320, 156.160, 158.030

## **KERA Initiative Summary**

**4/29/04**

### **School-Based Decision Making**

Research confirms that students achieve at higher levels when parents play an active role in their child's education. Through school-based decision making, parents are full partners in the effort to improve schools and education for each student.

Typically, a school council is composed of the principal, three teachers and two parents who serve in a decision making role at the school level to make decisions once made at the state or the district level. These key decision makers ensure that the needs of students and the interests of the broad community are primary considerations in the policy making process. A school's council selects the principal when that position becomes vacant and consults with the principal in the selection of the school's staff. The council has authority over the following:

- school budget,
- staffing assignment policy,
- professional development plans,
- curriculum policy,
- selection of appropriate instructional materials and techniques, and
- other key areas.

The council has a unique opportunity to affect the school's learning climate.

Teachers elect their representatives to the council. Teachers determine their own election process. Parents of students enrolled in each school elect the parent representatives. Parents also determine their election process. All parents may vote in these elections. When schools in Kentucky have 8% or more minority students, the law requires the election of a minority parent and teacher to the school council who are to represent the interests of minority students in the school. Parents and teachers not elected to the council may serve on committees that support the council's work. All parents and teachers are encouraged to attend council meetings, which are open to the public.

***Statutory References:*** KRS 160.345